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SUBMISSION PREPARED BY
THE VANIER INSTITUTE OF THE FAMILY
FOR
THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON VIOLENCE
IN THE COMMUNICATIONS INDUSTRY



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"On that tiny screen the viewers can experience the vast plains of the American West or he can feel as if he were in a spaceship from which he can see the infinite extension of outer space. With the manipulation of a simple switching device, he can go to a baseball stadium or race track.

Living in a confined space made of steel and concrete, people can experience all kinds of scenes and places through this small bright box. In the eighteenth century, when urban problems became explicit, in order to compensate for their loss of contact with a substantive natural environment, city inhabitants put paintings of ponds, birds and mountains in their surroundings. TV has now become decisive in this continuum of symbolic compensation. There is little physical space left in the cities but symbolic space is plentiful."

Hideloshi Kato

INTRODUCTION:

RECOGNIZING THE SCOPE OF THE ISSUE

The Vanier Institute of the Family has adopted a questioning stance concerning prevailing public social goals, values and perceptions. The Institute places current social structures - interrelated economic, political and cultural institutions and systems under question in order to examine whether in practice they actually promote or impede the well-being of persons, families and communities. Do these systems encourage free, responsible behaviour, or do they tend to limit and control Canadians' various ways of living? Such questions are asked continually during the Institute's ongoing search for social patterns which put human relationships, especially those of the family, first and not second. (1)

The Vanier Institute welcomes this opportunity to submit its concerns about television to The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry. We do this in the belief that any and all media programming policies play a crucial role in determining the nature of our society. They are all the more crucial if we in Canada are to seriously strive to create for ourselves a social environment less marked by societal tensions than is our environment today. (2)

The Institute has on many occasions stated that it recognizes that communication policies, (programming), affect the lives of all

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Canadians.

"Each new medium of communication has inherent in it the capacity to transform in a potentially powerful way both the public and private lives of all who come in contact with it. We recognize that the advent of television has altered many aspects of our family life and many of our institutions. At times, it has helped us to "see" each other in a different way; and sometimes more clearly and more tolerantly; sometimes through the broken images of bias and prejudice which it can help reinforce..." (3)

Georges Sorel in his book "Reflections on Violence" states that:

"Violence at its root definition is any violation of the basic human rights of a person. These violations can be social, economic, moral and political." (4)

While we agree with the Sorel definition, we further interpret violence as that which may impede personal growth, relationships and freedom of personal development.

We would like to point out that The Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry defines the nature of violence as action which intrudes painfully or harmfully into the physical, psychosocial, and social well-being of persons or groups.

We view this Commission's inquiry as being helpful, not only in reviewing violent content in programming and its possible connection to violence in society, but more importantly, we view the Commission's work as being constructive, primarily because it will also highlight and review some of the more global social effects and societal

transformations introduced since the advent of television.

PROGRAM BALANCE AND VARIETY?

In 1960, the British established the Pilkington Commission to conduct a thorough study of television.

It concluded that the duty of broadcasting, "is not to give the public what someone thinks is good for it, but rather to respect the public's right to choose from the widest possible range of subject matter and so to enlarge worthwhile experience." (5)

The Canadian Broadcast Act contains a similar directive:

"The Broadcasting System should be varied and comprehensive and should provide reasonable, balanced opportunity for the expression of differing views on matters of public concern, and the programming provided by each broadcaster should be of high standard..." (6)

Given these considerations, or directives, we should not normally feel ourselves inundated or overwhelmed by any one particular form of program, whether or not it is an over emphasizing of violent programming. In essence, we should already have a "balanced" system in terms of program type, method of presentation and variety of issues handled.

If this were a purely "Canadian" system, all would be well relative to the violence issue. Canadian systems produce 3% - 5% of programs

which contain violence, not necessarily because we cannot produce programs containing violence but because this type of programming is more economical to purchase from foreign sources. (7)

Canadian statistics indicate that 97% of homes have one or more television sets and that 32% of the national viewing audience subscribes to a cable service. However, in Ontario, well over 42% subscribe to cable service. We are also told that the national average for adult viewing, (18 years or over), is four hours per day, while children view an average of 3.5 hours per day. (8) There can be little doubt that television has become a pervasive element in our daily lives.

In the Toronto area, nightly between the hours of 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. there is an average of 37% violent programming. At certain time periods this figure increases to almost 50%. We also find that 65% of all programming available during those times originates from the United States, either by Canadian network purchase or more likely by direct importation through a cable system. (9) We suspect that these figures are tempered by the presence of TV Ontario and the importation of the Public Broadcasting System.

The problem becomes more acute in the smaller communities where the availability of two channels can present a real difficulty. While each station in an overall broadcast day may provide a reasonably balanced programming schedule, at any given time we may find that both channels offer

the same program "genre". Should we expect balance and variety during specific time periods over a given number of channels available?

We talk of balance, variety and the widest range of programming possible to enlarge worthwhile experiences. We find that there is actually an imbalance provided by imported U.S. signals that supply programming over which we have relatively little control other than choosing not to subscribe to a cable system. It seems that many Canadians have come to expect cable service as a "right" that has gone beyond that of a "clear picture", and has become a right to more channels, particularly U.S. channels. This has allowed a high proportion of programs that contain violence to enter Canada. Have we confused quantity with variety and balance?

We believe that an excess of any one type of program whether it is variety, melodrama, sports or documentaries on such a limited frequency or facility as a television station, negates the intent of the Broadcast Act. More importantly, it negates the rights of that segment of the population that is not particularly interested in the overemphasized form of program.

While we may, by the end of the Commission's work have a better glimpse at some of the issues surrounding television and violence, we rather doubt that we will have arrived at the definitive empirical conclusions. This is not said to undermine the work of the Commission.

In its final statement we may find that Canadians are not in a position to sufficiently control that which has been deemed harmful. We may find that we can only regulate that portion of programming that is directly imported by the Canadian networks. The predominance of programs containing violence enter Canada by cable and are beyond the capacity of the Canadian government and/or the networks and cable companies to regulate. But we must live on: What are some of the avenues of hope or action?

EXPECTATIONS AND LIFESTYLES

We would prefer to look at media, particularly television, within a total societal context. We understand that the Commission is prepared to undertake original research following the public hearings. In this vein, we would like to raise some questions about the nature of television, not only in terms of its content, but also in terms of the possible social impact television may have as a pervasive element in the emerging electronic environment. The question then becomes: Does the nature of the medium itself foster violence?

To look at the social effects of television outside the context of Canadians' lifestyles would be unrealistic. To look at the role that television plays in our lives we must consider it in the context of who we are, what we do and what we use in our day-to-day living. The effects

of television should be examined in relation to the quality of habitat, the changing form of travel, the changing form of learning, and the changing form of family relationships...

We question the view that television is the exclusive "actor" and that we as persons and families are those that are "acted upon" by media. Does the medium reinforce and foster an isolated and passive lifestyle? While it is true that it is dangerous to generalize, given what we know through ratings, it is fair to say that for a very great number of families, life has been reduced to eight hours of sleep, eight hours of work, some time for eating and then settling back for a minimum of what is categorized as a single period of uninterrupted relaxation.

We are in a sense experiencing the frustration of seeing a great portion of our lives disappear without human meaning or human significance. Have we begun to accept the idea that we may no longer need spontaneous contact and interaction with others? Indications are that in the last decade in the rush for bigger and better we may have sacrificed relational ties for economic gain. Are some of us now beginning to realize that the sacrifice may have been too great? Possibly increased television viewing has delayed this realization. We have come to expect the television set to fill time, to stimulate, to inform and to entertain. Have we become a passive people?

Have we come to expect anything and everything? Have we come to

expect the contradictory and the impossible? Did we ever expect Updike, Faulkner or Hemingway to publish a "masterpiece" on a monthly basis?

Do we expect a masterpiece a month (i.e. Book of the Month Club)?

Do we expect a major filmmaker to be able to produce more than one feature film a year? Does it seem unreasonable to expect or even demand 18 hours a day of "high standard" television programming? Given the human energy and resources that are required, do we really need 18 hours a day from each available channel?

Television has rearranged the habits and time allocation of the family. What has it replaced? Has it replaced relational activities which were aimed at meeting the same needs that television meets? Has it replaced them because it could do a better job of meeting those needs?

THE QUALITY OF EXPERIENCE THAT WE BRING TO TELEVISION

Is it imperative to ask: what is the quality of the stored experiences that we bring to the television event? How much of stored experience is based on the warmth of healthy interpersonal relationships, on personal strength, on the awareness and confidence of one's own significance? How often have our attempts at self-affirmation been met with: "later", "haven't got the time", or "that is not important" or "why don't you watch TV"?

We become more self-assertive, giving "power" to our stance and making clear what we are and what we believe. We do this against opposition. Has the thin line begun to emerge? Are our efforts at self-assertion continually blocked? As a result, do we turn to aggression?

"Finally, when all efforts toward aggression are ineffective, there occurs the ultimate explosion known as violence. Violence is the explosion of impotence..." (10)

The phases leading to violence as described by Rollo May are very useful in the search for reasons for society's increased crime level. He says:

"Violence has its breeding ground in impotence and apathy. As we make people powerless, we promote their violence rather than its control. Deeds of violence in our society are performed largely by those trying to establish their self-esteem, to defend their self-image and to demonstrate that they too are significant." (11)

Does television confirm this perceived personal and group impotence?

This type of evaluation suggests some of the roots of violence in our efficient, technological and competitive society. It seems to indicate something about the quality of the experiences and temperament we bring to television.

If we are bringing to television an increasing sense of apathy and impotence, then do we increase our passive viewing leading to outbursts of violence?

We are faced with questions of not only whether violent programs have an effect on society, but more importantly whether the nature of the electronic medium may, of itself, harbour or foster violent reactions, independent of any particular content. The work and practical experience of Tony Schwartz in his book "The Responsive Chord" may provide us with an initial perspective.

Schwartz states:

"Words transform experience into symbolic forms. They extract meaning from perception in a manner prescribed by the structure of the language, code this meaning symbolically and store it in the brain. The brain does not store everything this way. Many of our experiences with electronic media are coded and stored in the same way they are perceived. Since they do not undergo a symbolic transformation, the original experience is more directly available to us when it is recalled. Also, since the experience is not stored in a symbolic form, it cannot be retrieved by symbolic cues. It must be evoked by a stimulus that is coded in the same way as the stored information is coded.

"A listener or viewer brings far more information to the communication event than a communicator can put into his program, commercial or message. The communicator's problem then, is not to get stimuli across, or even to package his stimuli so they can be understood or absorbed. Rather, he must deeply understand the kinds of information and experiences stored in his audience, the patterning of this information, and the interactive resonance process whereby stimuli evoke this stored information." (12)

As Schwartz suggests, this principle is not that new but it may be more and more the cause of some of our dilemma. He says:

"Resonance is now a more operational principle for creating communication because much of the material that is stored in the brains of an audience is also stored in the brain of a communicator, by virtue of our shared media environment." (13)

He also suggests that in communication at electronic speed, we no longer direct information into an audience but try to evoke stored information out of them in a patterned way.

If this premise is operative, and Schwartz's experience suggests that it is, we should focus more attention on the level, quality and diversification of the experience that we bring to the set and not merely examine the content of any particular program.

He says that if there is a way that television fosters violence, it is by conditioning people to respond instantly to stimuli in their everyday lives.

"People develop an orientation to everyday life based on the patterning of electronic information. We become very impatient in situations where information does not move at electronic speed. The increased violence in our society is generated by impulsive reactions to stimuli in a situation. Constant exposure to television over a period of time, and the sharing of television stimuli by everyone in society, creates a reservoir of common media experiences that are stored in our brains." (14)

Have we conditioned ourselves to expect immediate resolution of issues that affect our lives? Are we looking for 30 and 60 second answers to relatively minor conditions, and 30 to 60 minute solutions

for major crises?

For example, in a political demonstration, there may be a flare-up between policemen and one demonstrator. Seeing this, other demonstrators may refer the incident to the body of stored personal experiences where similar incidents took place. Their previous personal experiences will be different, and therefore they are not likely to foster an instantaneous collective response.

On the other hand, if they refer what they see to previous media experiences of seeing demonstrations, a collective reaction is more likely. Television tends to show violent moments in demonstrations. The stored media experiences of the people in the crowd makes violence commonly available to everyone in the group as an appropriate collective reaction. This could also be operative at a level of personal behaviour.

The high standard of living as it is frequently portrayed on television contradicts the actual living conditions of many Canadian families. The distortions presented with high fashion, skillful interior decor and convincing plots with happy endings presented in a quantity of programs day in and day out, can lead to the need for many people to seek goods, services and lifestyles that may not be possible for them to attain. As a result, low level frustration is born.

The quantity of continuous information which is available to everyone as it is transmitted via television is unlimited given an average

18 hour program day. What the viewer does with the "information" implanted in the mind is of course unknown and could be problematic.

As has recently been discovered in a U.S. commercial for aspirin, the message had cleared the most stringent Federal Trade Commission rules for truth. In effect it projected to children that aspirin is something to take when they want to have a good time. This suggests that it is not sufficient to look at particular verbal program content for its relationship to truth or reality but that we must look at the total effect of the audio visual content, not simply the verbal statement.

THE EFFECTS OF OUR CHOICES:

TELEVISION AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR RELATIONSHIPS

The true effect of television may be misleading because it suggests that television does something to children and adults. The implication is that as viewers we are relatively passive and that television is relatively active. Wilbur Schramm says that we think we are the sitting victims and television bites us. (15)

If we are truly responsible, then we could be the most active in this relationship.

Something makes us reach out for a particular experience on television. This experience enters into our lives and has to filter its way through

the stored experience, the codified perception values, the social relationships and the immediate urgent needs that are already part of our lives. As a result, something happens to the original television experience. Something is discarded, and something is stored away, therefore something happens to us...

Have we on a societal level, diminished the value of a non-mediated experience - i.e. living and sharing and resolving, and exchanged it for a mediated pre-packaged experience? We no longer from necessity, cross over the fence to talk with our neighbours about our problems and joys, to exchange trusted and tried advice and comments.

We may no longer have access to members of the extended family - parents, brothers, sisters, grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles, due to mobility and an increased valuing of individual privacy. Have we exchanged the interaction of the back fence for the "soap opera" solution, resulting in the absence of interaction and an overemphasis of the one-way system of television? Has this led to a gradual changing of our personal stored experience by which we measure our own performance in life?

For many, work has ceased to provide a level of personal experience (challenge, fulfillment, excitement). As a result, we turn on television out of a sense of boredom to seek glamour, stimulation and fulfillment. How selective are we?

Do we have an insatiable television appetite because we want to believe in illusions and because we suffer from extravagant expectations? As ratings have indicated so clearly, we expect a nightly parade of television entertainment and we consume it.

There are several ways in which exposure to television could influence persons. It can exert an influence by taking persons away from other activities. If the other activities were harmful, then the effect of television would be wholesome. If, however, extensive television watching takes away from needed physical exercise, from interaction with family, friends and neighbours, and from alternate cultural activities, (defined in its broadest sense), then would we be more likely to judge the effects to be harmful? What is it about the quality of programs containing violence that would urge us to give up certain types of alternate activities? What needs does it meet?

To understand the nature of the effect, we have to understand a great deal about the lives of children as well as adults. It is clear that we must be concerned about the total pattern of activity, so as to discover, if possible, what is being given up in favour of the hours spent watching television.

By way of example, we may start to see what Ruth Griffiths' classic study of the play of five year olds reveals. It is that through fantasy of play, children attempt solutions to the problems of everyday living.

Fortified by the talent to pretend, they try to enact situations and roles to see how these feel and how conflicts about them can be resolved. (16)

Teacher and child psychologist, Dorothy H. Cohen says:

"For all children, reality begins with the concrete and physically real. Love, for example, means bodily contact, and repeated trustworthy considerations of their feelings and needs, not just words. Although words are important to hear, they are meaningless without the experiential underpinning.

"The very ability to play now seems to be affected in many children. As a little five year old told his teacher: 'I like to turn things on and watch it. I don't want to make anything.' Is that what happens when too many of children's experiences in life are with images instead of real things, with cartoons instead of real people, are passive instead of active?" (17)

Are adults immune to this process?

The person that brings a very diversified caring experience to television is supported by the quality of those experiences. However, part of the problem may arise from the fact that as television viewing increases, excluding us from alternate activities, all we may be bringing to television in the way of experience is a predominance of television programming.

This would seem to indicate that we should be concerned about the balance between experiential opportunities as well as those that provide observing opportunities, and violent content however it is defined.

We have seen the impact of new communication technology on family and community life. We have only to see the effects brought on by the introduction of the medium of the private automobile.

While the automobile provides us with rapid transportation on demand and a private mobile environment, we are now beginning to realize that while it has its many positive aspects we may still be paying too high a price. The automobile can be cited for an excess of fuel consumption, for air pollution, wasteful use of steel, an increasing death rate, and an increasing bite of the tax dollar for highway construction and so on...

Similarly, television may have introduced a considerable number of changes in terms of the type and quality of family life, and may be equally questioned.

It is suggested that the increase in violence that we are seeing is probably not only related to some of the program content but also possibly related to the changing nature of relationships.

There are several images of what members of the family used to do before television came into their lives. They spent many more evening hours interacting with each other, with relatives and neighbours. Each person pursued his or her own activities: they talked at length around the kitchen table, sang songs together, or listened to the radio.

They spent more time working long hours at the factory, doing chores, or cleaning house. These were the types of activities that occupied time. Television, however, is an "uninterruptable" activity.

Within a decade of the introduction of television, the average family had started to spend more time watching television than in any other single form of pastime. Only sleep and work consume more of the family's time than watching the TV set.

The substantial alteration in how a family spends its time raises questions about corresponding changes in the underlying relationships of family life.

At a minimum, activities which previously accounted for substantial portions of the family's time are now performed more efficiently or have been altered due to the presence of television.

Reading is a pastime that may be interrupted by others in the family. Interaction can take place if there is a need and reading can be resumed without anything being missed. However, if television viewing is interrupted, problems and issues may be dealt with but the program in progress has come and gone by the time viewing is resumed. If the viewing pattern is not altered then family relationships suffer.

Some children's fairy tales contain elements of horror and the child has to be taken to the book by the parent. As the adult reads to the

child, there are pauses for explanation, expressions of love and physical contact. On the other hand, the child can go to the television set without parental direction of any kind and without the support of interpretative relationship.

Have we changed simply because the television set is never too busy to talk to, (at) us and therefore we don't have to face the frustration of being brushed aside? Has television become a particularly potent force in families where parental influences and primary group ties are weak?

CONCLUSION

"In the past, the family has been viewed by social science generally as the dependent variable - that is, the family is acted upon by external institutions - and it adapts, copes and nurtures its members. Its function is to reproduce for society and to equip the members of the society to serve the larger society or to serve the other institutions in society.

"However, V.I.F. recognizes that the family has its impact on society and therefore can bring about change. The family is not simply a passive reactor affected by other elements of society, and adapting to these elements. Families are interacting with the other institutions of society."(18)

Human beings consciously learn through the influence of their environment. Learning is too often thought of as taking place only in schools. However, learning is not bound by a specific time and

place but extends across the full range of our human experience, draws on it, and takes place throughout our lives. Much significant learning for living takes place within the context of the family. The family itself is the prime family life educator.

All of us are constantly interacting negatively or positively with one another, with the environment and with ourselves. Life being complex, no one is more expert than those living a particular experience.

I. We each have a certain responsibility for dealing with the issues, the frustrations, and the problems that surround television programming, and the social effects of the medium of television. While we appreciate the concern and apprehension surrounding these topics, we recognize that censorship and/or control may be unrealistic given the nature of public and private broadcasting in this country. It is not up to governments and the broadcast industry alone to exercise caution or judgement. It is also up to us. We are not unable to act on our own. While many of us are vocal and concerned, ratings indicate that we have a tendency to watch what we refer to as damaging or harmful. This then, contradicts or negates our expressed concerns. The Institute encourages the development of learning opportunities which will assist the viewer in his/her understanding of the nature and effect of the medium.

II. The problem in the Canadian broadcasting system is not so much one of quantity of violent programs, but rather one of scheduling. One

network competes with a second and/or third by programming content of the same "genre" in the same time period. The most productive way to approach the problem may be to apply the same principles that have now been introduced by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission in the FM Promise of Performance schedule. (19)

A system of codifying program type should be established to enable the CRTC to examine the schedule for imbalances in daily program offerings. These daily schedules for each network could be superimposed on each station's Promise of Performance. If at any given time it is found that there is no real choice or diversity, i.e. they all opt for police programs at the same time or nature programs at the same time, then a new plan of programming schedules should be encouraged or insisted upon. This approach would at least ensure basic variety at a given time rather than the viewer being faced with three programs offering no choice.

III. We must come to realize that our expectations may outstrip the financial, creative and technical capabilities of any given station or network to program 18 hours a day. Should we be prepared to accept, or possibly demand, a reduction in the number of hours broadcast by any one of the stations?

We hear the industry complaining of costs and the ever threatening possibility of financial bankruptcy, yet we may be rapidly approaching

a different type of bankruptcy in the attempt to fill 18 hours per day per channel, a bankruptcy that results from depletion of energy and creativity under the current time constraints.

IV. The Vanier Institute of the Family cannot condone blatant, excessive programming of violent content in any form. The Commission will have heard sufficient examples and briefs to make this point. We are quite confident that the Commission will deal appropriately with the obvious exhibition of violence. However, we invite the Commission and all who have participated in the hearings, and those who will subsequently read about its findings to concern themselves with the broader social impact of the medium of television.

For the past 25 years we have worried, we have researched, we have debated the problems of whether violent television has an impact. We have reached the point where societally and personally we cannot wait for the "definitive empirical answer." We cannot wait, nor can we expect governments or the broadcast industry to be able to moderate all of the ills that we seem to feel exist in television.

While the Commission has pointed out that we are the experts we would point out that we are also our own directors. We direct our own choices within the home and within the community. We decide the activities in which we will participate. We decide whether we are going to watch television for an average of four hours a day, what it is we

will watch and whether it is to be continuous or selective viewing.

We decide whether or not we will subscribe to cable, to have an antenna, whether we will choose from three channels or 14 channels, whether our viewing will be interrupted by others, or if we will give the medium our total concentration.

While it is important to continually evaluate the performance of any given station and/or network, as well as the regulating bodies, it is as important, if not more so, to review our own performance. Who have we become as people?

V. If, as we have tried to point out, it is becoming more critical to learn and understand the perceptual effects introduced since the advent of television, regardless of the content of the medium itself, or if we have come to see that we bring far more information to the set than the actual program provides us with, it is critical that we concern ourselves with the quality and diversification of stored experience. If we bring to the television set a sense of impotence and apathy, we may be more susceptible to the effects of the medium. The balance that we bring between lived experience and symbolic or evocative experience becomes crucial.

We would recommend that it is not sufficient to simply decide what program or programs are appropriate or inappropriate to watch. It may be more important to evaluate the quality and level of lived experience that any family member brings to the television set. As the number

of television viewing hours increase, we exclude ourselves from a range and diversity of experience which may be more helpful in reinforcing relationships as well as one's own self-awareness and confidence. On that basis we must decide how much and what type of television should be viewed daily. It is critical to be present and actively engaged, or involved with children as they watch television. It is important for family members to interact while viewing any particular program, thus integrating television into the ongoing process of learning, playing and socializing which is supported by the warmth and strength of interpersonal relationships.

We possess the expertise required to personally control what we deem to be harmful. We each have a sense of the values, attitudes, approaches and qualities inherent in our family life that enable us to make reasonable and sound judgements and to act on those judgements.

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In one of a series of research papers prepared for the CRTC Symposium on Television Violence, a list of violent shows was compiled and matched with the schedules programming surveyed. From a list of violent shows perceived by academics, critics, producers and the public, a list of violent programming was compiled and matched with the scheduled programming surveyed. If a program fell within the selected time period and appeared on the compiled list, it was coded as violent. Such a list had the combined advantages of a priori judgements and subjective perceptions of violence, social, scientific and lay definitions of what constituted violent behaviour. Brand new releases or older series carried over from previous seasons often did not show up on the relatively recent lists. In this case, the coder relied on the TV Guide synopsis of the program for a description of content. Such a technique was used successfully by Clark and Blankenburg in their survey of television violence since 1953. If the episode of the program shown during the week of October 28 to November 3, 1974 was indicated to be violent by the TV Guide synopsis, the program was coded as violent.

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In one of a series of research papers prepared for the CRTC Symposium on Television Violence, a list of violent shows was compiled and matched with the scheduled programming surveyed. From a list of violent shows perceived by academics, critics, producers and the public, a list of violent programming was compiled and matched with the scheduled programming surveyed. If a program fell within the selected time period and appeared on the compiled list, it was coded as violent. Such a list had the combined advantages of a priori judgements and subjective perceptions of violence, social, scientific and lay definitions of what constituted violent behaviour. Brand new releases or older series carried over from previous seasons often did not show up on the relatively recent lists. In this case, the coder relied on the TV Guide synopsis of the program for a description of content. Such a technique was used successfully by Clark and Blankenburg in their survey of television violence since 1953. If the episode of the program shown during the week of October 28 to November 3, 1974 was indicated to be violent by the TV Guide synopsis, the program was coded as violent.

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